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DE RUEHVI #0606 1401529
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2605
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0040

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 000606

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2019
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [AU](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRIA HAS LOW-KEY INVOLVEMENT WITH CUBA
REF: SECSTATE 48487

Classified By: Economic-Political Counselor Dean Yap for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d).

Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Cuba
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11. (C) The Austrian government participates in the EU's "broad dialogue" with Cuba, which was officially revived in June 2008 after a period of suspension. Human rights and democracy are part of this dialogue. According to Austria's MFA, GoA officials also raise human rights issues "when appropriate" in bilateral meetings with Cuban counterparts. Austrian diplomats in Cuba meet with opposition leaders, Catholic Church officials, dissidents, and civil society representatives in conjunction with diplomats from other EU states. The GoA does not unilaterally issue statements or adopt resolutions regarding human rights in Cuba; such actions are taken via the EU.

High-Level Diplomatic Visits
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12. (U) A high-level delegation, led by Economic Ministry Director General Josef Mayer, visited Havana in November 2008 to discuss bilateral and multilateral trade relations as part of the "Joint Austrian-Cuban Economic Commission."

Austrian Investments in Cuba
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13. (SBU) To date, the only known Austrian foreign investment in Cuba is in a Havana brewery (Salm Brau), established in 12003. Any investments over 100,000 Euros are recorded by the Austrian National Bank and the bank's records do not indicate any new investments in Cuba for 2008. However, the Austrian Economic Chamber is promoting investment into Cuba in cooperation with the "Foreign Trade Promotion Center for Cuba" in Havana. Embassy Vienna knows of no Austrian direct investment that might be subject to Libertad III. We have no information regarding any new or contemplated projects that might result in litigation under the Libertad Act.

Bilateral Trade Agreements with Cuba
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14. (U) The Austrian-Cuban Agreement on Investment Protection and the Agreement on Economic, Industrial, and Scientific Cooperation have been in force since December 1, 2001. There has also been a double-taxation agreement with Cuba since September 2006. Austrian imports from Cuba, primarily tobacco and food products, were up 41% to 3.7 million Euros in 2008. Austrian exports to Cuba were down 16%, but tourism increased by 10% to more than 20,000 visits. Tourism has been facilitated, in part, by a 1992 bilateral air-service agreement which allows for direct charter flights between

Vienna and Cuba.

Exchange Programs with Cuba

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15. (SBU) There are no Austrian government-sponsored exchange programs with Cuba. However, an Austrian NGO, the Austro-Cuban Society, organizes annual "solidarity brigade" projects on farms and in the construction sector. Other Austrian NGOs may also occasionally engage in programs with Cuban organizations. Austrian universities operate exchange programs with Cuban universities.

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